

1935-39 Arkansas Centennial Half Dollar



Designed by Edward Everett Burr and modeled by Miss Emily Bates reduced at the Medallic Art Company. Distributed by the Arkansas Honorary Centennial Celebration Commission (later known as Arkansas Centennial Commission), A.W. Parke, Executive secretary. Mintage figures are in the body of the chapter. Rare Coins of New Hampshire (RCNH) image.

Authorized by Congress on May 14, 1934 and issued to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the admission of the State of Arkansas into the Union.

Design:

Obverse: Depicts a Quapaw Indian Chief wearing a feathered headdress and a female, representing Miss Liberty wearing a Phrygian cap with a wreath. The words ARKANSAS CENTENNIAL are at the bottom with the dates 1836 and 1936 to the left. LIBERTY is seen in the cap of Miss Liberty.

Reverse: The main device on the Arkansas state flag is a diamond shape (symbolic of the diamonds mined in Pike County) with twenty-five stars (for the 25th state) along its four-sided border. Within the diamond appears the word ARKANSAS with a single large star (representing Arkansas) above it and with three smaller stars beneath it. Two interpretations of the symbology of these 'three stars' are noted, one is that the three stars represent the three flags (Spain, France, and the U.S.) which had flown over Arkansas through 1836 when the state flag was adopted; the other view is that they are symbolic of Arkansas as being the third state admitted from the Louisiana Purchase. Around the rim is UNITED STATES OF AMERICA – HALF DOLLAR – 1936.

"The designs for the Arkansas half dollar, which will commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the admission of that State to the Union, have been selected by the coin committee of the Arkansas Centennial Commission, subject to the approval of mint authorities. Edward Everett Burr, of Paragould, Arkansas, was the artist who submitted the winning design. The one hundredth anniversary does not occur until 1936.

According to an illustration of the designs which appear in a Little Rock newspaper, the obverse shows a war-bonneted Indian head slightly to one side and partly behind a female head representing Liberty. Below is 'Arkansas Centennial - 1836-1936.' The reverse shows a spread eagle partly upon the State flag of Arkansas. Upon scrolls to left and right of the eagle are 'In God We Trust' and 'E Pluribus Unum.' The eagle is standing upon a rising sun on which is 'Half Dollar.' Above the flag is 'United States of America.'

An issue of 500,000 is authorized. They will be sold by the commission and the proceeds will be used to help defray the expenses of the centennial celebration to be held in Arkansas in 1936."¹



Original sketches by
Taxay p. 144.



Edward Everett Burr.

Original sketches by Edward Everett Burr. Taxay p. 144.

¹ *The Numismatist*, The Arkansas Commemorative Half Dollar, August, 1934, p. 508-509.



Original sketches by Edw. E. Burr. Courtesy of the Commission of Fine Arts.

Sketch suggestions by Lee Lawrie of the Commission of Fine Arts. Taxay p. 145.

Courtesy of the U. S. Commission of Fine Arts.

Minutes of Meeting held in Washington, D.C., July 26, 1934.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Swartwout,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Howells,
Mr. Lawrie,

Also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer.

Arkansas Centennial Coin: Under date of July 19, 1934, the following letter was received from the Acting Director of the Mint, requesting advice as to a design by Edward Everett Burr, sculptor, for the Arkansas Centennial coin:

Hon. Charles Moore, Chairman,
The Commission of Fine Arts,
Navy Building,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Moore:

This Bureau submits for your consideration drawings received from The Arkansas Honorary Centennial Celebration Commission of a design of the coin authorized by Congress for that celebration.

Will you please advise this Bureau whether or not in your estimation this design is suitable? The drawings are being sent to you by special messenger.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) M. M. O'Reilly,

Acting Director of the Mint.

Mr. Lawrie's attention was called to the design. On examining it he said there is nothing in it worthy of a United States coin. The obverse showed two portrait heads and the reverse a very inferior eagle.

The Commission unanimously disapproved the design and informed the Acting Director of the Mint accordingly. (**Exhibit A**)

Exhibit A

July 27, 1934

Dear Miss O'Reilly:

The sketch for the Arkansas Memorial Coin, which you submitted with your letter on July 19, received the attention of the Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on July 26, 1934. The sketch was given particular attention by Mr. Lee Lawrie, sculptor member of the Commission.

The Commission recommends the disapproval of the sketch because of unsuitability for a coin of the United States.

The Commission suggests that the Arkansas authorities be requested to submit another sketch prepared in accordance with the established laws of Medalllic designs as followed by the United States Mint.

For The Commission of Fine Arts:

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Charles Moore, Chairman.

Miss M. M. O'Reilly,
Acting Director of the Mint,
Treasury Department,
Washington, D. C.

Minutes of Meeting held in New York City, September 17, 1934.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman,
Mr. Howells,
Mr. Clarke,
Mr. Lawrie,
Mr. Savage,
Mr. Coolidge,

Also Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Executive Secretary and Administrative Officer. There were also present Mr. Arno B. Cammerer, Director of the National Park Service, Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, landscape architect, and Mr. Daniel P. Higgins and Mr. Otto Eggers, representing Mr. Pope's office.

Arkansas Centennial Coin: The Secretary stated that during the past week Senator Caraway of Arkansas and the Arkansas Memorial Committee had urged that Mr. Edward E. Burr be retained as the artist to design the Arkansas Centennial Coin and that Mr. Burr had sent the following telegram setting forth his qualifications:

Chicago, Illinois,

September 14, 1934.

H. P. Caemmerer,
Secretary, Fine Arts Commission,
Navy Building, Washington, D. C.

Centennial Secretary Parke of Little Rock requests wiring you my qualifications briefly. President Trees of Medalllic Art Company likes my work and reproduce my Daily News Lindbergh Medal which won place in Chicago Art Institute Exhibition. Crowe Company produced medal miniatures of my last year's World's Fair Poster model.

E. E. Burr

The Arkansas Memorial Commission proposed to have Miss Emily Bates of Arkansas make the models in the studio of Mr. Lorado Taft and this was confirmed by telegram from Mr. Taft to the Secretary, as follows:

Chicago, Illinois,

September 14, 1934.

H. P. Caemmerer,
Secretary, Fine Arts Commission,
Navy Building, Washington, D. C.

Emily Bates has permission to model relief in my studio. Lorado Taft.

The matter was brought to the particular attention of Mr. Lawrie, who said that if Mr. Taft would give the Arkansas Centennial Coin models supervision, the arrangement proposed would be satisfactory to him. However, Mr. Burr should be required to submit a new design to the Commission.

Mr. Lawrie suggested that the obverse should show only one head and that a new eagle should be designed for the reverse, or preferably something of interest in Arkansas history. The Commission concurred in these suggestions. A letter was sent to Senator Caraway accordingly. **(Exhibit C)**

Exhibit C

September 18, 1934.

My dear Senator Caraway:

I was much pleased to receive your telegram at the meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts in New York City yesterday, regarding the Arkansas Centennial Coin. The Commission gave the matter full consideration, and agreed to retain Mr. Burr as the artist to design the coin.

However, the Commission requests that Mr. Burr submit a new design, both for the obverse and the reverse. The Commission suggests that the obverse show only one head. For the reverse a new design of an eagle should be made, more simplified than shown in the sketch submitted; or something of interest might be shown that would be of real interest to Arkansas historically. It might help matters if the artist would submit several alternate sketches (not necessarily drawn out in detail) for the consideration of the Commission.

After the designs are approved by the Commission of Fine Arts, it is understood that the models will be made by Miss Emily Bates in the studio of Mr. Lorado Taft, sculptor, of Chicago, Illinois.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) H. P. Caemmerer,

Secretary

Hon. Hattie W. Caraway,

United States Senate, Washington, D. C.



Hattie Wyatt Caraway, 1878-1950, three-quarters length, standing, facing left. Hattie Ophelia Wyatt Caraway was the first woman elected as a U.S. Senator. Courtesy of Library of Congress (LOC) Prints and Photographs Division, Reproduction Number: LC-USZ62-63753 (b&w film copy neg.) February 19, 1932.

"To the Director of the Mint Nellie Tayloe Ross from the Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts Charles Moore on February 9, 1935, regarding the design for the Arkansas Centennial Tercentenary Half Dollar.

Quite frankly I am writing you about the design for the Arkansas Centennial Coin. The object of securing the advice of

the Commission of Fine Arts on designs for coins and insignia was to assist the Mint in the endeavor to make our coinage and insignia equal to the world's best. You have now connected with the Mint Mr. Sinnock, a man well trained in the special and most exacting art of the medal, and he has designed some exceptionally good things. His knowledge and taste can be counted upon both as to artistic effects and also as to the craftsmanship essential to production. The average sculptor employed to design a memorial coin is inexperienced both in the particular art and the craftsmanship necessary to success. Under the instructions of a local committee, he crowds into his design all the historical incidents suggested to him.

Then he has to struggle with 'In God We Trust' and 'E Pluribus Unum', as well as the dates. So that the design instead of being simple, direct, and effective, becomes an historical epitome; and the natural result is that it does not circulate but piles up at the Mint and has to be reminted. Thus the very purpose of the memorial coin is defeated.

The sculptor members of the Commission of Fine Arts have had large experience in Medallion work. One of them designed the 50-cent piece and the dime; another designed the nickel and the Victory Medal before they became members of the commission.

So that it is from experience that their criticisms are made. As to the Arkansas Memorial Half Dollar, it is suggested to you that while the two heads are fairly good, the remainder of the work has an unprofessional amateurish look. 'The letters of UNITED STATES OF AMERICA should be at least equal in size to the letters of ARKANSAS in the diamond. The letters in the word HALF should be the same size as those in the word DOLLAR—naturally. The head, legs and talons do not suggest those of an eagle. The bird should be an eagle. It may be realistic or stylized; but it must convey the idea of the eagle.

On the Centennial side, LIBERTY needs a deeper neck, with more strength in the back. Her cap should be higher at the peak. The letters in ARKANSAS CENTENNIAL should be larger—considerably larger; and should be disposed so as to compose better with the heads. The dates should not be so close to the outlines of the necks and the figures should be larger.

The middle bars of the F and E should not be shortened. The shortening is regarded as a mark of poor taste.

Is there any way by which the Mint could specify a list of medallists [*sic*] of successful experience?

To the Director of the Mint Nellie Tayloe Ross from the Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts Charles Moore on March 2, 1935, regarding the design for the Arkansas Centennial Tercentenary Half Dollar.

The models for the Arkansas Centennial Coin, designed by E. E. Burr and modeled by Miss Emily Bates are returned herewith. Upon recommendations of the sculptor member of the Commission of Fine Arts, Mr. Lee Lawrie, the Commission have approved the models. Mr. Lawrie makes the following additional suggestions:

When the models are being prepared for the dies, Mr. Sinnock should see that the indefinite modeling about the eagle is made clearer; that there be more space between IN and GOD and that the E before PLURIBUS be completed. The heads are fairly good, but there is a lack of completeness about the lettering and all the details of the reverse.

A set of photographs of the models also are enclosed."²

"The following letter has been received from A.W. Parke, executive secretary of the Arkansas Honorary Centennial Celebration Commission, P.O. Box 1300, Little Rock, Ark.:

'It will be several months before the coins are minted and ready for distribution and the sale price will be \$1.00 each. The bill authorizing the coinage calls for 500,000 of the coins. We shall notify you when we have the coins ready for distribution.'"³

² *The Authoritative Reference on Commemorative Coins 1892-1954*, Kevin Flynn, published by Kyle Vick, 2008, p. 258.

³ *The Numismatist*, Status of Commemorative Half Dollars of 1934, January, 1935, p. 26.



Arkansas coin as issued, modeled by Emily Bates after designs by Edward Everett Burr, Sr. Courtesy of The Commission of Fine Arts.

| DATE | BUSINESS STRIKES | ASSAY COINS | PROOFS | MELTED | NET MINTAGE |
|--------|------------------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------|
| 1935 P | 13,000 | 12 | 4 | - | 13,000 |
| 1935 D | 5,500 | 5 | 4 | - | 5,500 |
| 1935 S | 5,500 | 6 | 4 | - | 5,500 |
| 1936 P | 10,000 | 10 | 4 | 350 | 9,650 |
| 1936 D | 10,000 | 10 | 4 | 350 | 9,650 |
| 1936 S | 10,000 | 12 | 4 | 350 | 9,650 |
| 1937 P | 5,500 | 5 | 4 | - | 5,500 |
| 1937 D | 5,500 | 5 | 4 | - | 5,500 |
| 1937 S | 5,500 | 6 | 4 | - | 5,500 |
| 1938 P | 6,000 | 6 | 4 | 2,850 | 3,150 |
| 1938 D | 6,000 | 5 | 4 | 2,850 | 3,150 |
| 1938 S | 6,000 | 6 | 4 | 2,850 | 3,150 |
| 1939 P | 2,100 | 4 | 4 | - | 2,100 |
| 1939 D | 2,100 | 4 | 4 | - | 2,100 |
| 1939 S | 2,100 | 5 | 4 | - | 2,100 |

AUTHORIZED PER ACT OF MAY 14, 1934: 500,000 TOTAL FOR ISSUE.

OFFICIAL SALE PRICE: 1935 ISSUE \$1 PER COIN.
 1936 ISSUE \$1 PER COIN.
 1937 SET \$ 8.75.
 1938 SET \$ 8.75.
 1939 SET \$10.00.

REASON FOR ISSUE: The State of Arkansas was admitted to the Union in 1836. To commemorate its one hundredth anniversary, Congress approved on May 14, 1934, the authorization of 500,000 silver 50-cent souvenir pieces. Thus the Arkansas, as it is known to most collectors, was minted.

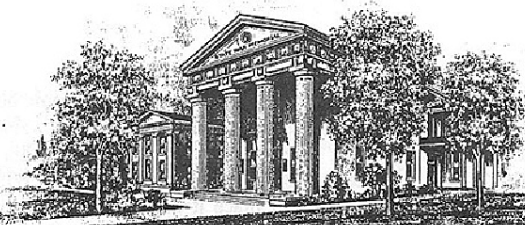
Courtesy of the *SUSCC*, Fall/Winter, 1997. Arkansas Centennial Half Dollars by Anthony Swiatek (R-004 – NY), p. 16.

HON. J. M. FUTRELL
GOVERNOR OF ARKANSAS
HONORARY CHAIRMAN



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
H. C. COUCH, CHAIRMAN
J. G. LEIGH, VICE CHAIRMAN
ROBERT E. WAIT, TREASURER
A. W. PARKE, SECRETARY
DR. J. H. REYNOLDS
T. H. BARTON
MRS. E. W. FROST
F. W. SCOTT
MARION WASSON

1836



1936

Arkansas Centennial Commission

A DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WAR MEMORIAL BUILDING

DIRECTOR OF CELEBRATION
ALBERT R. ROGERS

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

JUNE 15TH TO
DECEMBER 5TH

July 30, 1936.

Mr. Daniel E. Bloomfield,
132 Nassau Street,
New York.

Dear Sir:

The Arkansas Centennial half-dollars for 1936 are now on sale at \$1.50 each. The Arkansas Centennial Commission has received as its initial order, 5,000 coins from each the San Francisco, Denver and Philadelphia Mints. An additional 5,000 coins from each of the three mints has been issued. There will be no discount for quantity orders and remittances should include registration fee and postage according to the following schedule:

| NUMBER COINS | REGISTRY FEE | POSTAGE |
|--------------|--------------|---------|
| 1 | 15¢ | 3¢ |
| 2 or 3 | 15¢ | 6¢ |
| 4 | 18¢ | 6¢ |
| 5 or 6 | 18¢ | 9¢ |
| 7 or 8 | 18¢ | 12¢ |
| 9 or 10 | 18¢ | 15¢ |
| 11 or 12 | 18¢ | 18¢ |
| 15 | 18¢ | 24¢ |
| 20 | 20¢ | 30¢ |
| 25 | 20¢ | 39¢ |

Please send money order or certified check in payment.
Do not send stamps. They are not legal tender. Our supply of 1935 coins is entirely exhausted.

ARKANSAS CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

AWP:OH

A. W. Parke
A. W. Parke,
Secretary.

"ARKANSAS BANKERS ASSOCIATION
923-924 Southern Building
Little Rock, Arkansas,

April 23, 1935

Dear Sir:

Responding to your letter of April 11. I regret that I cannot give you the date when the Arkansas centennial half dollars will be received from the mint. I will be pleased to notify you when they are ready for distribution.

Very truly yours,

Robert E. Wait, Chairman Coin Committee
Arkansas Centennial Commission.

ARKANSAS CENTENNIAL COMMISSION
Little Rock, Arkansas

January 17, 1936

Dear Sir:

On supply of Arkansas commemorative half-dollars for 1935 is exhausted and checks and money order received are being returned to the senders with regret.

We obtained 13,000 coins from the Philadelphia Mint and 5,000 each from the San Francisco and Denver Mints, expecting these to fill all orders received for 1935 coins. We under estimated the demand by several thousand.

An order will be placed with all three mints early in January which should be available before February 1. The design is the same as in 1935. The year of coinage alone is changed. We will be please to book orders for the 1936 coins and if you are among those unable to secure our 1935 coins and desire to return the remittance to us, it will be promptly filled upon the receipt of the new coins. . .

A.W. Parke,
Secretary

WINDHAM ELECTRIC COMPANY
73 Church Street
Willimantic, Conn.

January 22, 1936

Dear Mr. Nichols:

Glad to hear from you. I am just as interested in collecting as ever but have not been doing much recently for several reasons. One is that I have been short of funds to buy coins with and then I rather lost my enthusiasm on commemorative coins a just as I had my collection complete they begin to bring out new numbers so fast that I cannot keep track of them. And, instead of being new designs they simply use the same old design and just put on a small D or S as it may be and then collectors scramble after them again to add to their collection.

I much prefer to see coins brought out of a new design such as Old Spanish Trail, Conn., or Providence and thus add to the attractiveness of a collection than to have a number of same designs as they are doing. I intend to pick up these extra numbers as I have a chance from time to time but do not wish to pay top prices if I can help it. I have the Scott album filled except two and that means thirty-eight coins. I also have the Kentucky 1935 with 1935 on and have no others except a few duplicates.

That means I am short the Texas 1935–Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco, also the Arkansas 1935-S and D and will need the 1936 Arkansas Philadelphia, Denver and San Francisco when they are available. In commemorative gold I am short Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson 1903 dollar and both Lewis & Clark to make my collection complete. . .

If you wish to quote me price on these commemorative half dollars I would be interested or the three gold pieces I need. Maybe I will get a little money ahead so I can buy them in the near future. If prices are satisfactory I might have you hold them for me and give you a deposit and send you a little every week until they are paid for.

Hope to hear from you at your convenience, and remain,

Yours sincerely,

M. Leslie Nichols

ZIM STAMP AND COIN CO.

856 East 17th South

Salt Lake City, Utah

April 18, 1936

Dear Mr. Nichols:

Pardon the delay in answering, illness part of the time and inquires to our ad reason for delay in answering.

We are pleased to advise we can use the Providence (2 sets) and the Arkansas S and D 1935 for which we will trade 100 1931-S Uncirculated Lincoln cents. This is equivalent to \$8.00 per set for Rhode Island and \$6.00 for the two Arkansas.

We have been selling many of the 1931-S cents at \$22.00 per 100, have traded 400 for set rare D & S Boones, have just traded 600 for Brilliant Proof Stella \$4 gold piece.

Within six months these cents will be selling at 75c to \$1.00 each and \$30.00 to \$50.00 per 100...

Very truly yours,

Zim Stamp and Coin Co.

C.J. Zimmerman

P.S. We will not guarantee the offer of 1931-S cents for longer than two weeks from date.



Part of a collection of coins, tokens, paper money, etc., received from President Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 29, 1941, from A. W. Parke, Arkansas Centennial Commission, Box 1300, Little Rock, Arkansas. Courtesy bequest of Franklin D. Roosevelt, FDR Library MO 1941-40-4-1.

. . . Most of the 1936 issue was sold out of state, so many local residents referred to the 1936 coins as the 'Orphan' issue. The Arkansas coin is one of the coins most heavy in symbolism for the commemorative series. This fact was admitted by the coin's designer, Edward Everett Burr, in a letter to the Federal Commission of Fine Arts. The symbols included 13 stars on the flag of the State of Arkansas. The flag included 25 stars (Arkansas being the 25th state admitted to the Union). Within the diamond are 4 large stars, the 3 lower ones representing the 3 flags which have flown over the Arkansas Territory: Spain, France, and the U.S. The largest star, which is above the other 3, represents Arkansas' joining the Confederacy. The 7 longest rays, the original seceding states; and the 6 short rays, the states that later joined the Confederacy. . .

(Reproduction of postcard from Arkansas Centennial Commission sent June 2, 1938)

Announcing Increase on

Arkansas
Commemorative Half Dollars
Effective July 1, 1938

On and after July 1, 1938, all Arkansas Commemorative half dollars will be advanced in price to \$10.00 per set—Philadelphia, San Francisco and Denver Mints. This price applied in Arkansas on May 1, where a campaign is now on to dispose of coins on hand within the State. Orders from outside the State will be received and filled that show, by the postmark, to have been mailed prior to July 1, at the prevailing price—\$6.75 for '36s, \$8.75 for '37s and '38s. This price includes all mailing charges. Remit by money order or check—no stamps accepted. Order direct from the

ARKANSAS CENTENNIAL COMMISSION

A.W. Parke, Secretary

(Reproduction of postcard from Arkansas Centennial Commission sent October 19, 1938)

Your order for 1939 Arkansas Commemorative half dollars has been received and entered. You understand that these coins cannot be minted until 1939. Our order will be placed with the mint so that those coined in Philadelphia will be delivered soon after January 1, 1939.

The dies must then be transported to the Denver and San Francisco mints, and it will some time in February when coinage is completed. Immediately upon receipt of the coins they will be forwarded to the address given with your order. With a limited issue, and orders arriving so numerously, we are certain to be sold out within the next few weeks. Your reservation has been made so you are protected.

Yours very truly,
W.W. Parke [sic], Executive Secretary
Arkansas Centennial Commission
Little Rock, Ark.

(Reproduction of postcard from A.W. PARKE sent August 12, 1939)

CLEAN-UP SALE ON ARKANSAS COMMEMORATIVES

Having acquired, through an advantageous purchase, all unsold issues of Arkansas commemoratives, I offer, while they last, several hundred sets each of 1936s and 1938s at the following prices:

1936—P-D-S \$6.75 per set

1938—P-D-S \$8.75 per set

These prices include postage and insurance. Both issues were limited and have been sold by the Arkansas Centennial commission at \$10.00 per set. At this price the supply will soon be exhausted. First come, first served.

Mail check or money order to:

A.W. Parke
Box 189, Little Rock, Ark.

If your order is received too late, check or money order will be returned immediately.”⁴

“ . . .

David M. Bullowa related the following concerning the sale of the early pieces: ‘The 1935 Philadelphia Mint pieces were sold by the Commission directly, but the bulk of the branch mint issues was (*sic*) handled by a dealer (Mehl). The Arkansas Centennial Commission of Little Rock, Arkansas, did not care to handle the retail sale of these coins after 1936, and as a result, as early as 1935 the Commission was traveling about the country, prepared to sell its rights to the highest bidder. Because of this unsettled situation, the Arkansas series has been nicknamed the ‘orphan issue,’ as they were available anywhere except Arkansas.’¹ The Arkansas Centennial Commission of Little Rock, Arkansas, did not care to handle the retail sale of these coins after 1936, and as a result, as early as 1935 the Commission was traveling about the country, prepared to sell its rights to the highest bidder. Because of this unsettled situation, the Arkansas series has been nicknamed the ‘orphan issue,’ as they were available anywhere except Arkansas.’⁵

Early in January 1936, by which time the commemorative craze had been fanned from a spark into a flame by the unavailability and subsequent skyrocketing value of the low-mintage 1935 with ‘small 1934’ Boone issues, Mehl felt that the market could stand a higher price for the Arkansas issues, so he offered his supply of 1935 coins at the advanced price of \$2 for the Philadelphia pieces and \$2.75 each for the branch mints. A special offer enabled a buyer to acquire a pair of branch mint pieces for \$5.

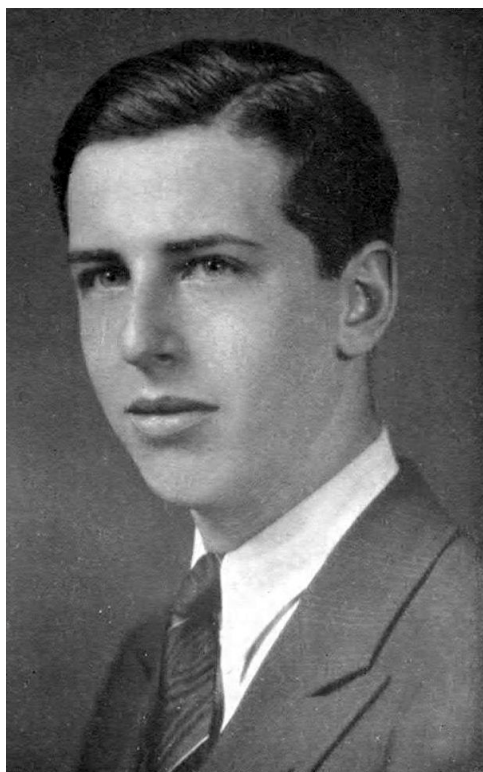
By January 20, 1936, Mehl had raised his prices again on 1935-dated Arkansas half dollars. A brochure made this offer: ‘NOW your opportunity for. . . numismatic investments is again ‘knocking at your door.’ Last month 5,500 Arkansas Centennial half dollars were minted at the Denver and San Francisco Early in January 1936, by which time the commemorative craze had been fanned from a spark into a flame by the unavailability and subsequent skyrocketing value of the low-mintage 1935 with ‘small 1934’ Boone issues, Mehl felt that the market could stand a higher price for the Arkansas issues, so he offered his supply of 1935 coins at the advanced price of \$2 for the Philadelphia pieces and \$2.75 each for the branch mints. A special offer enabled a buyer to acquire a pair of branch mint pieces for \$5. Early in January 1936, by which time the commemorative craze had been fanned from a spark into a flame by the unavailability and subsequent skyrocketing value of the low-mintage 1935 with ‘small 1934’ Boone issues, Mehl felt that the market could stand a higher price for the Arkansas issues, so he offered his supply of 1935 coins at the advanced price of \$2 for the Philadelphia pieces and \$2.75 each for the branch mints. A special offer enabled a buyer to acquire a pair of branch mint pieces for \$5.

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⁴ *An Inside View of the Coin Hobby in the 1930s: The Walter P. Nichols File*, Edited by Q. David Bowers, Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., Copyright 1984 by Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., p. 49, 52, 63, 67, 72, 116, 123, 128.

1. The Arkansas Centennial Commission was an official department of the State of Arkansas and maintained offices in the War Memorial Building, Little Rock (earlier address: Arkansas Honorary Centennial Celebration Commission, P.O. Box 1300, Little Rock). A.W. Parke served as secretary and signed most of the correspondence and advertisements and was the central figure in coinage distribution. Honorary chairman was J.M. Futrell, governor of the state; chairman of the Executive Committee was H.C. Couch; director of the centennial celebration was Albert R. Rogers. Early orders (those received at least up to April 23, 1935, per correspondence with Walter P. Nichols) were handled by Robert E. Wait, chairman of the Executive Committee was H.C. Couch; director of the centennial celebration was Albert R. Rogers. Early orders (those received at least up to April 23, 1935, per correspondence with Walter P. Nichols) were handled by Robert E. Wait, chairman of the Coin Committee, who wrote on Arkansas Bankers Association stationery.

⁵ Letter from A.W. Parke to H.J. McCloskey, February 12, 1936. Bowers and Merena Galleries Reference Collection. In a transaction involving four coins 21¢ additional for postage was charged.



David M. Bullowa. Courtesy of the ANA Library.

I have a limited number of this very limited coinage and offer them to you until February 20th, subject to prior sale, at these *special low prices*: 1935 Arkansas Centennial half dollars. Denver and San Francisco mints, \$2.95 each; 1935, Philadelphia Mint, \$2.25; *Special price for the set* of three coins, only \$7.65. (If you already have the Philadelphia Mint coin, I'll let you have the pair of rare San Francisco and Denver coins for only \$5.75 for the two.)

'This special offer is good only until February 20th. Not more than 10 coins of each will be sent to any one party. If any of my limited supply of these rare coins are unsold on February 20th, the price will advance to \$3.50 or more each. After that date positively no orders will be accepted at the above special prices. If you will stop to consider that 10,000 Hudson half dollars were issued, and only a few months later they were selling at \$8.50 each; that the 10,000 Spanish Trial coins issued just three or four months ago are selling for \$6 each; if is not necessary for me to tell you just when or how high these Arkansas half dollars will go, since only 5,500 of each of the branch mints and only 13,000 of the Philadelphia Mint were coined. Maybe you are not buying coins for investment, but it does make you feel darn good to know that the coins you buy are worth a great deal more than you paid for them. Your purchase of the above coins will certainly be a better

investment—with greater profit—than you could have in any other line. . . '

Notwithstanding all of the enthusiasm he expressed in his advertising, apparently Mehl was less than satisfied with the deal, for he did not seek to handle the next Arkansas coins, those dated 1936. During 1936, the actual centennial year, the Arkansas Centennial Commission handled the bulk of the sales. A.W. Parke, secretary of the Commission, first offered each of the three Philadelphia, Denver, and San Francisco coins for \$1 apiece,¹ but on February 1, 1936 he raised the price to \$1.50 per coin, later to \$4.50 offered only as a set of three. Still later Parke decided that unsold sets should be sold for \$6.75, which was equal to \$2.25 per coin. Sales were sluggish, particularly after the crash in the commemorative market which occurred in late summer, and thousands of unsold pieces were wholesaled to dealers (including B. Max Mehl) at little if anything over face value.

In correspondence from B. Max Mehl to Walter P. Nichols, April 6, 1937, Mehl discussed the Arkansas design: 'I think it is a horrible monstrosity, yet I have received quite a number of letters saying that it is one of the most beautiful coins of the series. In the likes and dislikes of designs of coins, it is no different than the likes and dislikes in other matters. Some of us like to wear red neckties and others like blue, and so it goes.'

By end of year 1936 it was decided to go the dealer route once again for distribution of subsequently dated coins.

1. Advertisement printed on a postcard to Walter P. Nichols, postmarked December 12, 1939. This seems to be prima facie evidence that Parke was selling 1939 sets in 1939 for double the official issue price; whether the issue was 'sold out' as claimed earlier is left up to the reader's imagination.

The franchise was given to Stack's, a firm which had opened a few years earlier in New York City under the ownership of Joseph, Morton, and Shirley Stack. It fell to Joseph Stack to be in charge of the advertising and distribution of the Arkansas sets. Black leatherette cases were made up for the 1937 offering.

Of the 5,500 sets struck in 1937, Stack's announced the intention to reserve 500 for distribution to citizens of Arkansas, and the balance of 5,000 was to be offered to the numismatic fraternity, a reflection, undoubtedly accurate, of the fact that at the time commemoratives were made more to turn a profit from collectors than they were to be part of a valid celebration. Besides, by 1937 the anniversary of the Arkansas Centennial was over. Stack's offered the 1937-dated sets for \$8.75 each. (Stack's had a related distribution in early 1937 of a 'special issue' of 1936-dated Arkansas 50¢ pieces bearing on one side the portrait of Sen. Joseph Robinson of Arkansas and on the other the standard eagle motif as used on Arkansas half dollars since 1935. These are described separately in the present text under the 1936 heading for Robinson-Arkansas half dollars.)

Joseph B. Stack sent the following comment in a letter to dealer Walter P. Nichols dated April 24, 1937: 'Believe me, when I reach the age of eighty, I never want to look at another commemorative. Until then, if there is money to be made in it, I'll play with them. Otherwise, I will extend the glory to our fellow numismatists. Believe it or not, we start sending out the new headaches [1937 Arkansas sets] during the coming week.'

In 1938 the Arkansas Centennial Commission once again offered sets directly to collectors. The mintage quantity was raised to 6,000 coins from each of the three mints, and the price remained the same. A letter dated February 8, 1938, from A.W. Parke to H.J. McCloskey noted: 'The 1938 issue of the Arkansas Centennial commemorative half dollar will be ready for distribution around February 10. There will be 6,000 coins issued [from each of the mints]. The price of these coins is \$8.75 per set, which includes postage and insurance. . . Make remittance payable to Arkansas Centennial Commission. The limit on the 1938 half dollars is five sets per person.' Only July 1, 1938, the official issue price was raised to \$10 per set. Sales of the 1938 Arkansas sets proved disappointing, and just 3,150 sets eventually found buyers.

In the November 1939 issue of *The Numismatist*, A.W. Parke stated in a full-page advertisement that 1,850 sets of the 1938 Arkansas coins had gone back to the Mint. Parke offered remaining 1938-dated sets for \$8.75 each, stating there would be 'no advance in price. . .for the present. . .If there are still coins on hand December 1, the surplus will be sent back to the Mint, and museum specimens made of the few remaining. Should this be done there will be a material price increase in the handful left.' Later, an additional 1,000 of the 1938 sets were sent to the Mint for melting. In 1938 Parke also offered unsold 1936 sets at \$6.75 per set. He noted that his next advertisement would announce a price advantage if there were any coins left to sell.

Projections for coin sales were much less optimistic for the following year, and in 1939 just 2,100 Arkansas sets were offered for \$10 each, representing a new high initial price. In 1939 the Arkansas Centennial Commission was once again distributing its own coins. In 1938 Parke also offered unsold 1936 sets at \$6.75 per set. He noted that his next advertisement would announce a price advantage if there were any coins left to sell.

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On October 19, 1938, the following acknowledgement was sent by A.W. Parke, executive secretary of the Commission, to Walter P. Nichols: 'Your order for 1939 Arkansas commemorative half dollars has been received and entered. You understand that these coins cannot be minted until 1939. Our order will be placed with the Mint so that those coined in Philadelphia will be delivered soon after January 1, 1939. The dies must then be transported to the Denver and San Francisco mints, and it will be some time in February when coinage is completed. Immediately upon receipt of the coins they will be forwarded to the address given with your order. With a limited issue, and orders arriving so numerous, we are certain to be sold out within the next few weeks. Your reservation has been made so you are protected.'

At the new high issue price of \$10 per set apparently sales were brisk, for the low mintage was attractive to what few collectors and speculators remained in the market. A.W. Parke announced that the issue had sold out quickly.

Martin F. Kortjohn, a member of the Board of Governors of the ANA, wrote an open letter to the members of the United States Senate. Published in *The Numismatist*, December 1938, Kortjohn's letter complained about an advertisement by the Arkansas Centennial Commission which appeared in *The Numismatist*, October 1938, stating that orders were now being taken for the 1939 Arkansas commemorative half dollars. The offending text noted: 'Only 2,000 sets, Philadelphia, Denver, and San Francisco, will be obtained. These will be gone by the date of issuance, January 1, 1939. When the supply is exhausted, there will be no more. First come, first served. Mail check or money order for \$10 per set.'

Kortjohn stated: 'The special attraction which makes such high-handed methods possible is that only 2,000 sets of the coins will be requested by the commission, the small issue causing the price to rise considerably after the sale by the commission. Arguments might be advanced to the effect that collectors do not have to buy the coins, but the fallacy of this argument may be readily seen if one considers the reactions of collectors who have previously made a complete collection of these very interesting commemorative coins. The coins must be purchased in order to keep the collection complete; thus their sale at the high price advertised may be likened to robbery.'

'Despite the fact that I am writing this letter, I shall order and pay for my sets so that my own collection of the commemorative coins shall remain complete. I am thinking of the many collectors who are not as able as I to buy them. If these pieces are issued by the three mints in 1939, they will be the 13th, 14th, and 15th pieces of the Arkansas Centennial (1936) half dollars having exactly the same obverse and reverse designs but differing only in dates and mintmarks. In addition, there is also issued another Arkansas half dollar bearing the likeness of Senator Robinson on the reverse. All of these have been issued since 1935.' Kortjohn also went on to take sharp issue with C. Frank Dunn's policy of charging high prices for Boone commemorative coins.

A.W. Parke kept selling Arkansas sets until at least 1940. An advertising notice dated March 1, 1940, announced that unsold 1936 sets would be raised in price to \$10 and unsold 1938 sets to \$12. Further (who was he kidding?): 'Through a lucky trade I have acquired 10 sets of 1939s which I hold at \$20 per set. They won't last long, for so far as I know, they are the only ones on the market.'

NGC has certified one proof each for 1938-P, 1938-D, and 1938-S. It is believed that two 1938 sets were struck in Philadelphia for Mint Chief Engraver John Sinnock when all dies were in Philadelphia."⁵



Nicely toned Arkansas Centennial half dollar. Courtesy of Eagleguy/J. Helgeson on the NGC Coin Forum.

⁵ *Commemorative Coins of the United States; A Complete Encyclopedia*, Q. David Bowers. Published by Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., Box 1224, Wolfeboro, NH 03894, 1991, p. 277-282.

"Do proof coins exist for this issue? Yes! Before the dies destined to be sent to the "Denver and San Francisco Mints were shipped, John R. Sinnock, Chief Mint Engraver, ordered struck (each year) two sets of the extremely rare and beautiful matte proof (double struck, acid treated) coinage. (Their respective mint marks were 'punched in' at the Philadelphia Mint). Coins can be acid treated or sandblasted (as the case of the Hawaiian issue). However, what cannot be added is an additional striking! Upon side-by-side inspection with a business strike, the difference is readily observed. Should a possible proof candidate cross your path, send it to me for a free evaluation. Would personally pass on any specimen offered as a satin finish proof. In my opinion, they were never created at any of the Mints! If you cannot resist the offering, you must attempt to have it graded by NGC, PCGS, or ANACS for your own protection! Will be happy to be of any assistance."⁶

"The Arkansas Then

The original sketches created by Edward Everett Burr of Little rock and modeled by Emily Bates from the same state were rejected. These creations were frowned upon by the Commission of fine Arts, viewing the original reverse eagle as one of the advertising type. In fact, Mint Director Nellie Tayloe Ross was to suggest later that Miss Bates-no relation to Norman and Mama Bates-should be replaced with a medalist of successful experience. Nevertheless, the state centennial committee opposed their dismissal.

Based on sketch suggestions by Lee Lawrie, sculptor member of the Commission, the issue was modeled by Emily Bates, under the supervision of Illinois sculptor Larado Taft, an intermediary between the creators and the Commission. On December 5, 1934, the new sketch was returned to Mr. Burr with the addition of the date, 1935. Models were prepared on February 7, 1935. Mr. Lawrie informed Fine Arts Secretary, H. P. Caemmer that the finished plaster model of the original eagle reverse had an unprofessional look. Also be aware that the anniversary dates (1836-1936) were the only dates slated to appear on the original obverse on the lower field. His suggestions and criticisms were presented hurriedly to make the coin a reality. The eagle side that was supposed to be the original reverse was suddenly referred to as the 'UNITED STATES SIDE,' while Miss Liberty and the Indian Chief were labeled the 'Centennial Side.' Thus the U.S. side was designated the obverse with the date of issue now seen in the lower border.

Why the quick change from the artist's obverse to reverse? Commemorative half dollars produced in 1892 through 1934 display their dates of striking, or statutory inscriptions (U.S.A., etc.), or its anniversary dates on their obverse or reverse design. The rules which applied to regular circulating coinage did not apply here. Howbeit, the Alabama was the first creation to possess three dates! Its year of production (1921) on the obverse and the centennial dates (1819-1919) on the reverse. Our 1934 Texas issue (which also was struck only at the Philadelphia Mint) was the second coin to do likewise. The third creation scheduled to bear three dates was our Arkansas. The pressure was on the Mint to produce a coin as quickly as possible. With the addition of the added 1935 date to the design, it was decided by the 'power that were' simply to follow the Alabama-Texas three-date pattern. Your obverse is determined by the year in which a coin was minted, while the celebration or anniversary dates grace the reverse.

The Arkansas Centennial Anniversary occurred in 1936, but the first coins struck to commemorate that event were produced in 1935. Why? Because the gentlemen in charge of the Arkansas Centennial did not want to be outdone by other commemorative committees. They wanted their commemorative coins struck and issued as soon as possible. Hence, 10,000 pieces were created at Philadelphia during May 1935.

By September of that year, all the pieces were sold through the Arkansas Centennial Commission of Little Rock at \$1 each. Since requests for the coin were still being received, the commission decided it might be wise to have a small additional quantity struck. They enlisted the aid of Ft. Worth (Texas) coin dealer, B. Max Mehl.

I would like to bring to light some recently discovered information dealing with a special request, airmailed Mint Director Ross. After the said discussion with Mr. Mehl, A. W. Parke, the Commission's secretary, informed the Director in his typed message about the authorized purchase of the Arkansas 1935 issue to be struck at the Mints. Howbeit, the correspondence requested the placement of an oversized mintmark in order that it would be more distinguishable than the customary small D and S.

⁶ Courtesy *SUSCC*, Fall/Winter, 1997, p. 25.

In addition to that, he also desired half of the total Mint production flaunt the mintmark on the obverse and the remainder on the reverse! Unfortunately, his request was denied on the grounds that it would involve additional expenses which the Mint could not be reimbursed for, since there was no provision in the law permitting the latter, plus the fact that his request would involve a change in policy, which the Mint did not feel justified in making.

Mr. Mehl's advice was followed, and 3,000 commemorative halves were struck at Philadelphia. In November 5,500 pieces were produced at each of the branch Mints. Few sold at \$1, since he purchased most of these coins! In January of 1936, Mehl offered the 1935-D and 1935-S issues at \$2.75 each and the 1935-P at \$2. If you already owned the Philadelphia coin, you could get the other two for \$5. Approximately eleven years later, the lower mintage creations were offered separately from the higher-production issue.

In the centennial year, 1936, 10,000 coins were struck at each Mint, selling for \$1.50 per coin. Later they sold for \$6.75 per set. After year's end, the commission had no desire to direct the retail disposal of the coins. They wanted to sell out the remaining stocks to the highest bidder. Many of the coins were sold, in lots, to dealers for resale in other states. These conditions combined to make the series obtainable anywhere except in Arkansas! Accordingly, the series soon acquired the sobriquet or nickname of 'Orphan Issue.'

Unprinted one-piece coin holders with inserts for five half dollars were used to distribute the 1935 and 1936 Arkansas coinage. Attempt to acquire with the 1936 stamped mailing envelope from Commission which is seldom seen. Reverse flaunts a colorful red, white, and blue centennial stamp and 1936 date. At times, individual coins of the first two issues are seen housed in B. Max Mehl's coin envelopes. No real extra value here. . .⁷

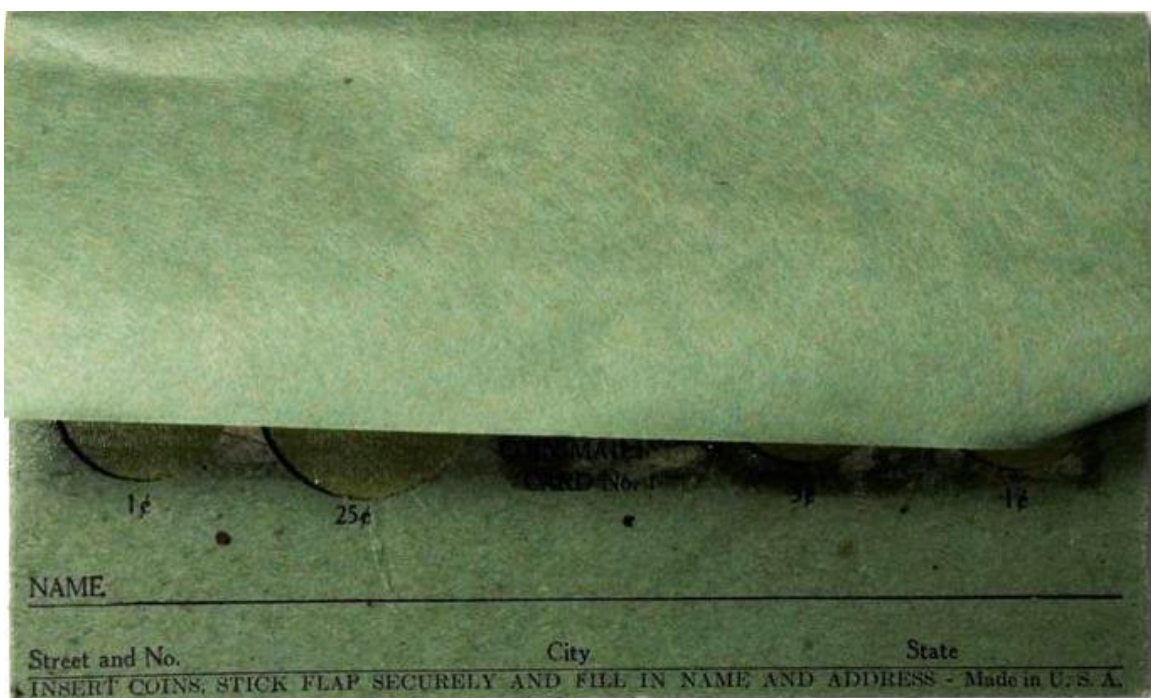


Courtesy of a collector who requests to remain anonymous.

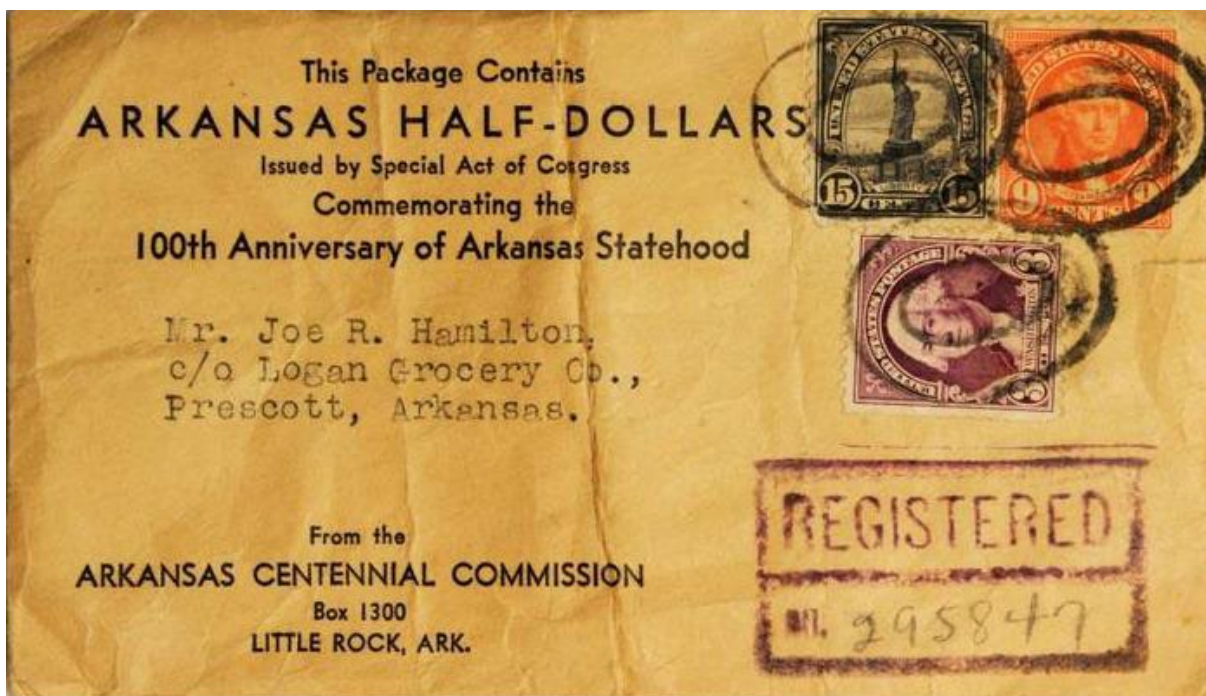
⁷ The Arkansas Centennial Half Dollars by Anthony Swiatek (R-004 – NY). Courtesy SUSCC, Fall/Winter, 1997, p. 17-18.



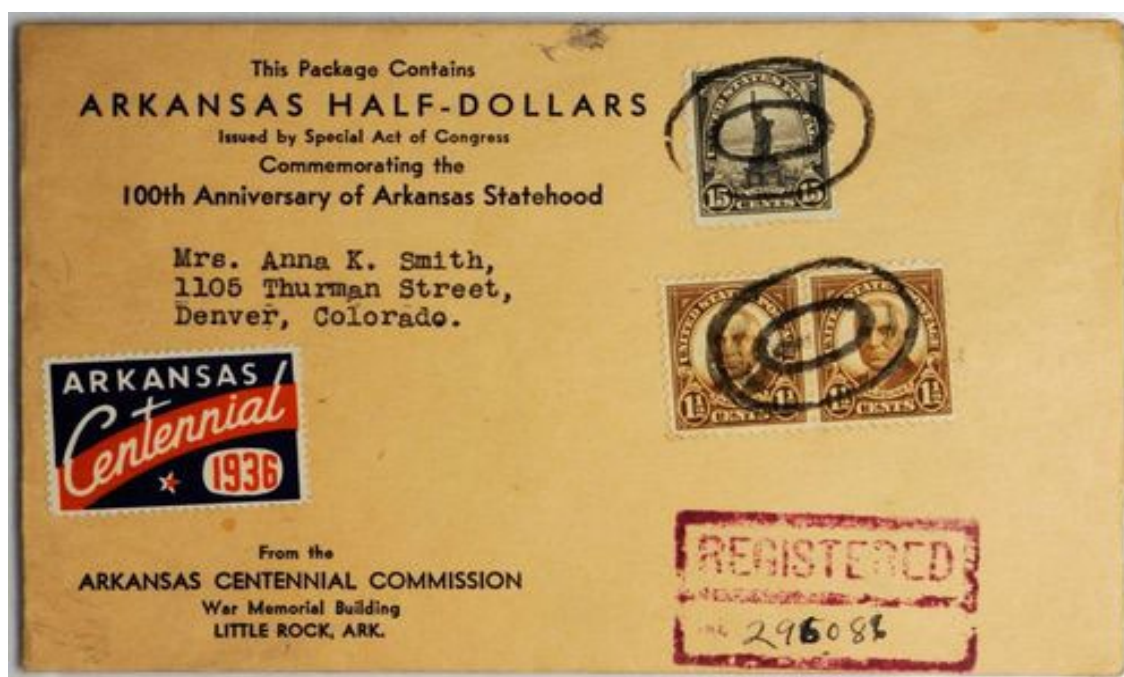
1939 Arkansas Centennial, PDS Set, which was in the original box with original mailer from the Arkansas Centennial Commission, War Memorial Building, Little Rock, Arkansas. The original mailer is from the Arkansas Centennial Commission in Little Rock. It has a 6-cent stamp with a portrait of John Quincy Adams, and a Little Rock postmark. The set resides in a plain cardboard box, which is also original. The three coins were in transparent plastic coin envelopes. Courtesy Stacks Bowers Galleries.



A green Dennison coin mailing card. Courtesy Stacks Bowers Galleries.



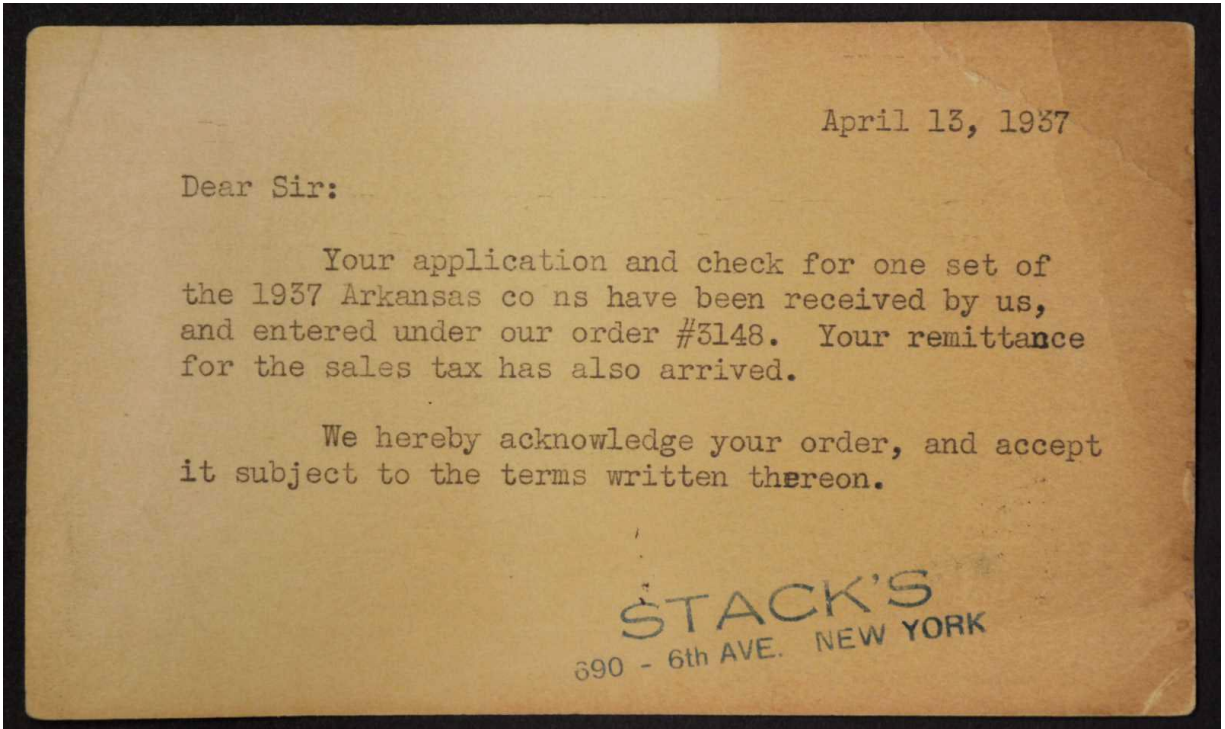
1935 Arkansas Centennial half dollar mailing envelope. Return address "From the / ARKANSAS CENTENNIAL COMMISSION / Box 1300 / LITTLE ROCK, ARK." The envelope was manufactured by the United States Envelope Company of Springfield, Mass. (not Dennison). It has 27 cents in cancelled definitive postage stamps affixed, and is postmarked in purple ink LITTLE ROCK, ARK. / July / 11 / 1935. The envelope is sealed using a 1936 Arkansas Centennial label. The envelope was shipped via registered mail to a recipient in Prescott, Arkansas. Courtesy Stacks Bowers Galleries.



1936 Arkansas Centennial original mailing envelope. The envelope has 18 cents in cancelled definitive postage stamps, and three postmarks in violet ink; two of the postmarks are for Little Rock, Arkansas dated JUN / 30 / 1936. The third postmark is for Denver, Colorado, dated JUL / 2 / 1936. Courtesy Stacks Bowers Galleries.



Back of for the 1936 Arkansas Centennial Half Dollars Courtesy *Stacks Bowers Galleries*.



1937 Arkansas Centennial an original Arkansas half dollar mailing envelope coin mailing card. Courtesy of Stacks Bowers Galleries.



Arkansas 1936 Centennial, Little Rock, First Day Cover. Courtesy of Stacks Bowers Galleries.



Arkansas 1936 Centennial, Little Rock, First Day Cover. Courtesy of Stacks Bowers Galleries.



The 1936 U.S. postage stamp commemorating Arkansas's centennial celebration. Courtesy of *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*.

Cornelius Vermeule writes: "The vapid, dated, and confused coin that marked the Arkansas centennial in 1935 is an unfortunate example in the commemorative series of collaboration between an artist who knew little of anything about die design and an amateur full of notions about local patriotism and local lore (fig. 202). The sculptor was Edward Everett Burr of Chicago, and the model was prepared by Emily Bates of Arkansas. Other such combinations of local artist or antiquarian zeal and quasi-professional modeling or finishing will be shown to have been ever more unfortunate, in the instances of the half dollars for the Old Spanish Trail and the Wisconsin territorial centennial (figs. 206 and 209).

The Arkansas Centennial coin is one of the last examples to use the time-honored motifs of Liberty and a Native American in combination. In addition, with two exceptions in the commemorative series, this coin marks a farewell to the artistic concepts of the Indian and Liberty on U.S. coins. (A head of an Indian appears on the obverse of the coin for the Long Island tercentenary, and a standing Liberty is the centerpiece of the fifty-cent piece for the Lynchburg, Virginia, sesquicentennial.) On the Arkansas coin the Indian's head is Jugate to the left with that of Liberty. Liberty resembles a chinless society girl of the 1920s, and the Indian is either a weak death mask or a man in a trance. This combination and its formless, pseudomodern style are flaccid and senseless, and Liberty looks like a contemporary department store model. The obverse is a jumble of spikes, lines, and curves; the state symbolism is so obscure as to be pointless. The rising sun motif forms the excuse for a background. Adolph A. Weinman, following Roty, had demonstrated all that needed to be done with this technique of filling the composition, on his regular issue half dollar of 1916 (fig. 160.)

As in the Boone half dollar, a thick rim affords a valid transition between edge and field. Otherwise, in the Arkansas Centennial half dollar the only decent feature of obverse and reverse is the eagle facing with head lowered. This bird rises to the level of some of the carved heraldry of the 19th century."⁸

⁸ *Numismatic Art in America; Aesthetics of the United States Coinage*, 2nd edition, Cornelius Vermeule, Whitman Publishing, LLC, 2007, p. 175.



Edward Everett Burr. Courtesy *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*.

“Bio for Edward Everett Burr: Born in Lebanon, Ohio on January 18, 1895, Edward Everett Burr studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and was a pupil of Leopold Seyffert and Albino Polasek. At times during the 1930s he maintained studios in Little Rock, Arkansas and in Urbana, Illinois. He received prizes from the Society for Sanity in Art (a Chicago group in which he maintained an active interest) and in 1933 from the Art Institute of Chicago. His works were exhibited at the Society for Sanity in Art (1938, 1941), the Art Institute of Chicago (1926, 1927, 1931), and the Illinois Academy of Fine Arts (1927). Edward Everett Burr was particularly well known in the Chicago area.

Commemorative credits: 1935-1939 Arkansas Centennial half dollar (prepared designs that were modeled by Emily Bates), 1936 Robinson-Arkansas half dollar (reverse, or eagle side).

Bio for Miss Emily Bates: Emily Bates was an Arkansas sculptress, according to news items published in the 1930s. During the preparation of models for the Arkansas half dollar in 1935, she worked in the Chicago studio of

famed sculptor Lorado Taft.

Commemorative credits: 1935-1939 Arkansas Centennial half dollar (prepared models from designs by Edward Everett Burr), 1936 Robinson—Arkansas half dollar (reverse, or eagle side).”⁹

Congressional Authorization Act:

[PUBLIC—NO. 225—73^D CONGRESS]
[S. 2901]

AN ACT

To authorize the coinage of 50-cent pieces in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the admission of the admission of the State of Arkansas into the Union.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in commemoration of one hundredth anniversary of the admission of the State of Arkansas into the Union there shall be coined at the mints of the United States five hundred thousand silver 50-cent pieces of such design as the Director of the Mint, with the approval of the Secretary of the Treasury, may select; but the United States shall not be subject to the expense of making the models or master dies or other preparations for this coinage.

SEC. 2. All laws now in force relating to the subsidiary silver coins of the United States and the coining or striking of the same, regulating and guarding the process of coinage, providing for the purchase of material, for the transportation, distribution, and redemption of the coins, for the prevention of debasement or counterfeiting, for security of the coin, or for any other purposes, whether said laws are penal or otherwise, shall, so far as applicable, apply to the coinage authorized by this Act.

⁹ *Commemorative Coins of the United States; A Complete Encyclopedia*, Q. David Bowers. Published by Bowers and Merena Galleries, Inc., Box 1224, Wolfeboro, NH 03894, 1991, p. 694, 699.

SEC. 3. The coins authorized by this Act shall be issued only to the Arkansas Honorary Centennial Celebration Commission, or its duly authorized agent, in such numbers, and at such times as they shall be requested by such Commission or any such agent, and upon payment to the United States of the face value of such coins.

Approved, May 14, 1934.